

Response by Linus Pauling

Nobel Ceremony, Oslo

1 P.M., 10 December 1963

(Your Majesty, Your Royal Highnesses,) Mr. President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I shall not attempt to conceal from you the fact that I am a happy man today. I have been a happy man throughout my adult life--and here I acknowledge that for over forty years my wife has been largely responsible for my condition--but today I am especially happy, in that I am the fortunate recipient of the greatest honor that any person can be given--the Nobel Peace Prize.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to the Nobel Committee of the Norwegian Parliament for having selected me for this great honor; to the Norwegian Parliament itself; to all of the people of Norway; and to those people all over the world whose striving for peace has led to a degree of success such as to permit me to be here today.

For I know that this Prize is a recognition not of my work alone, but also of the work of many other people who have striven to bring hope for permanent peace to a world that now contains nuclear weapons that might destroy our civilization; and especially of the scientists who have engaged in this effort--Albert Einstein,

Bertrand Russell, Alexander Topchiev, Hideki Yukawa, and thousands of others.

I remember Alfred Nobel's statement in 1892, as reported by Bertha von Suttner: "My factories may well put an end to war sooner than your [peace] congresses. The day when two army corps can annihilate one another in one second, all civilized nations, it is to be hoped, will recoil from war and discharge their troops".

We have now reached the day when not just two army corps but two great nations have the power to annihilate one another in a period little longer than one second; and we have learned that not only the explosives factories but also the peace congresses are necessary to get the civilized nations to recoil from war and discharge their troops. But this wonderful process is now going on; we are beginning to move toward the world of peace and disarmament foreseen by Alfred Nobel, in which the only war waged by humanity will be the war against disease and misery.

There is an interesting similarity between the life of Alfred Nobel and my life; closer, I am sure, than for any earlier recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. Alfred Nobel was a chemical engineer and chemist, with a deep antipathy for war: I was educated as a chemical engineer and chemist, and I have striven to eliminate war from the world. Most of Nobel's 355 patents dealt with explosives. Two of my four patents are on explosives. Among the many subjects that Nobel listed as worthy of study by him there are a number that I have investigated. These include not only explosives and world

peace, but also chemical nomenclature, atomic structure, the interactions between atoms, blood transfusion, the functions of the brain, thought and memory, and the philosophy of cells and the cosmos. And Nobel was full of ideas; he said "If I have a thousand ideas a year, and only one turns out to be good, I am satisfied". I, too, am full of ideas; and I would be satisfied with one good idea per year.

I wish that Alfred Nobel had been able to live until now, when his great goal of a world without war is in sight. He has been described as a pessimist; but he was clearly an optimist, in that he thought that it was worth while to encourage work for fraternity among nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies, and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses. I, too, am an optimist, and I am glad that in a short period of time, during the last two decades, there has come into existence the machine that Nobel wanted to invent, the "machine with such terrible power of mass destruction that war would thereby be made impossible forever".

I wish that Alfred Nobel had not been a lonely man. I have not been lonely. Since 1923 I have had always at my side my wife, Ava Helen Pauling. In the fight for peace and against oppression she has been my constant and courageous companion and coworker. On her behalf, as well as my own, I express my thanks to Alfred Nobel and to the Nobel Committee of the Norwegian Parliament for the award of the Nobel Peace Prize for 1962.